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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
FARM SERVICE AGENCY

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F O R I M M E D I A T E R E L E A S E

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program Offers Additional Incentives

(Spokane, WA July 26, 2000) –The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) offers landowners more incentive than ever to install riparian buffers for fish habitat improvement. Today, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Farm Service Agency and the Washington Conservation Commission announced additional payments for landowners to enroll in CREP. The voluntary program pays landowners annual rental payments for land developed as riparian buffers.

Major changes in the program include an increase from 150 to 200 percent of the Farm Service Agency annual soil rental rate and a one-time contract signing incentive of \$10 per acre per year. Now, landowners will also receive 100 percent reimbursement on the cost of installing the buffer. Sixty percent will be in the form of cost-share as the buffer is installed and the other 40 percent is a practice incentive payment to be paid when the buffer is certified as completely installed.

"When we first began this program, we made our best estimates as to what incentives would entice landowners to enroll," said Larry R. Albin, FSA State Director. "However, the eligible land also tends to be highly productive so we've had to increase the payments to make the program a viable economic option for landowners."

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"We've also learned how challenging it can be to establish trees in areas where competing vegetation grows rapidly. Landowners will be reimbursed maintenance costs for the first five years of their contracts," said Steven R. Meyer, Executive Director of the WA Conservation Commission. Maintenance activities are part of a conservation plan developed between landowners and their local conservation district or U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service. CREP contracts last 10 to 15-years.

Another change involves land eligibility. Originally, eligible land included agricultural areas next to critical or depressed salmon spawning areas, according to 1992 data. Now, conservation districts, working with fisheries biologists, can nominate additional streams that are critical habitat for threatened or endangered fish recovery. The Washington Conservation Commission and the Farm Service Agency State Committee will accept suitable nominations.

Landowners can find out more about the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program at their local USDA Service Center or conservation district office.

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